

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the Final Office Action mailed October 19, 2006 (the "Final Office Action"):

1. Claims 15, 28 and 41 are rejected under 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.
2. Claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 18, 19, 21, 22, 31, 32, 34 and 35 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over US Pub. No. 2005/0021467 to Franzdonk in view of US Pub. No. 2005/0273862 to Benaloh et al.;
3. Claims 3, 20 and 33 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh and US Pub. No. 2004/0030656 to Kambayashi et al.;
4. Claim 5 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh and US Pat. No. 6,898,708 issued to Hori et al. ("Hori-1");
5. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Hori-1;
6. Claims 12, 25 and 38 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of US Pub. No. 2001/0053222 to Wakao et al.;
7. Claims 13, 26 and 39 are not mentioned in the Final Office Action, but in the previous Office Action were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of US Pat. No. 6,901,385 issued to Okamoto et al. and further in view of US Pat. No. 6,792,280 issued to Hori et al. ("Hori-2");
8. Claims 16, 29 and 42 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh and US Pat. No. 6,865,555 issued to Novak;
9. Claims 45 and 45 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh and US Pub. No. 2003/0046238 to Nonaka et al.;
10. Claims 46 and 47 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh, Nonaka and Kambayashi;
11. Claims 52 and 54 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh and Nonaka; and
12. Claim 53 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Franzdonk in view of Benaloh, Nonaka and Kambayashi.
13. Claims 17, 30 and 43 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The specification has been amended to correct a typographical error in the "Brief Description of the Drawings". No new matter has been added.

2. Rejection of Claims 15, 28 and 41 under 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph:

Claims 15, 28 and 41 have been amended to delete the objected to phrase "in a predetermined manner", and with such deletions, the claims are believed to be patentable with respect to 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph.

3. Rejection of Claims 1-5, 8-9, 12, 15, 18-22, 25, 28, 31-35, 38, 41, 44-47 and 52-55 under 35 USC 103(a):

Claim 17 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but was indicated in the Final Office Action as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, Claim 1 (base claim for Claim 17) has been amended to include the limitations of Claims 16 and 17, and with such amendment, is believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over Franzdonk, Benaloh, Kambayashi, Hori-I, Wakao, Okamoto, et al., and another, and is believed to be patentable over another.

Claims 2-5, 8, 9, 12 and 13 are also believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, since they depend from Claim 1, and as such, are also believed to be patentable for at the least the same reasons as stated in reference to Claim 1.

The specification has been amended to correct a typographical error in the "Brief Description of the Drawings". No new matter has been added.

1. Rejection of Claims 15, 28 and 41 under 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph:

Claims 15, 28 and 41 have been amended to delete the objected to phrase "in a predetermined manner", and with such deletions, the claims are believed to be now patentable with respect to 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph.

3. Rejection of Claims 1-5, 8-9, 12, 15, 18-22, 25, 28, 31-35, 38, 41, 44-47 and 52-55 under 35 USC 103(a):

Claim 17 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but was indicated in the Final Office Action as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, Claim 1 (base claim for Claim 17) has been amended to include the limitations of Claims 16 and 17, and with such amendment, is believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over Franzdonk, Benaloh, Kambayashi, Hori-1, Wakao, Okamoto, Hori-2, Novak, and Nonaka (the "cited references"), alone or in combination with one another.

Claims 2-5, 8, 9, 12 and 15 are also believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, since they depend from Claim 1, and as such, are also believed to be patentable for at the least the same reasons as stated in reference to Claim 1.

Similarly, Claim 30 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but was indicated in the Final Office Action as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, Claim 18 (base claim for Claim 30) has been amended to include the limitations of Claims 29 and 30, and with such amendment, is believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, alone or in combination with one another.

Claims 19-22, 25 and 28 are also believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, since they depend from Claim 18, and as such, are also believed to be patentable for at the least the same reasons as stated in reference to Claim 18.

Also, Claim 43 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but was indicated in the Final Office Action as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Accordingly, Claim 31 (base claim for Claim 43) has been amended to include the limitations of Claims 42 and 43, and with such amendment, is believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, alone or in combination with one another.

Claims 32-35, 38, 41 and 44-47 are also believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, since they depend from Claim 31, and as such, are also believed to be patentable for at the least the same reasons as stated in reference to Claim 31.

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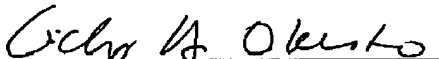
Claim 52 has been amended to include the distinguishing limitations of objected to Claims 17, 30 and 43, and with such amendment, is also believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, alone or in combination with one another.

Claims 53-55 are also believed to be patentable under 35 USC 103(a) over the cited references, since they depend from Claim 52, and as such, are also believed to be patentable for at the least the same reasons as stated in reference to Claim 52.

Claims 1-5, 8-9, 12, 15, 18-22, 25, 28, 31-35, 38, 41, 44-47 and 52-55 remain pending in the application. Claims 6-7, 10-11, 13-14, 16-17, 23-24, 26-27, 29-30, 36-37, 39-40, 42-43 and 48-51 have been cancelled. Reconsideration of the rejections of the claims is requested for the reasons stated herein, and an early notice of their allowability earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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